

19. (Amended) The lock washer of claim [17] 15, wherein, following the release of a compressive load, said tube engagement flanges are configured to flex into said relaxed state.

REMARKS

A Supplemental Information Disclosure Statement is being filed herewith to cite references that were indicated by the European Patent Office to be considered relevant in its search report on related European patent application EP 99 10 0796, which claims priority to the parent of the referenced application.

The outstanding Office Action has been received and reviewed. Claims 1, 9, and 13 have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. Applicant appreciatively notes the Examiner's indication of the allowability of the subject matter recited in claims 4, 9, 10, 11, and 15. Claims 4 and 15, which were indicated to recite allowable subject matter, have been amended to independent form to include the limitations of the rejected base claims (1 and 13, respectively) from which these claims previously depended. The remaining amendments to the claims have been made merely to changed claim dependencies and to address the rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph. Each of the amendments to the claims are made without prejudice or disclaimer. Reconsideration of the referenced application is respectfully requested.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 112, Second Paragraph

In the rejection of claims 6, 7, 10, 11, and 17-19 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, it was asserted that each of these claims was indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which Applicant regards as the invention.

Each of claims 6, 7, 10, 11, and 17-19 has been amended as suggested in the outstanding Office Action, with the exception that the term "configured" has been used in place of the suggested term "adapted". It is respectfully submitted that claims 6, 7, 10, 11, and 17-19 now meet the standard of 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph. Therefore, it is respectfully requested that the § 112, second paragraph, rejection of these claims be withdrawn.



Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b)

Claims 1-3, 5-8, 12-14, and 16-19 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent 5,603,702 to Smith et al.

Claims 1 and 12 have been canceled.

Claims 2-3 and 5-8 now depend either directly or indirectly from claim 4 as amended, which the outstanding Office Action indicates is allowable, and are each therefore allowable.

Claims 13-14 and 16-19 now depend either directly or indirectly from claim 15 as amended, which is indicated to be allowable in the outstanding Office Action, and are each therefore allowable for at least this reason.

Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that the 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) rejection is moot and withdrawal thereof is respectfully requested.

Conclusion

Claims 2-8, 10-12, and 14-19 remain pending in the referenced application. Applicant respectfully solicits a notice of the allowance of these claims at an early date. If any issues remain preventing the allowance of any of the pending claims, the Examiner is respectfully invited to contact the undersigned.

Respectfully submitted,



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